



# The Lincoln Kinsman

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Number 29

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

November, 1940

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## Roanoke River Hanks Colony

HANKS FAMILIES OF BRUNSWICK, LUNENBURG, BEDFORD, CHARLOTTE, AND CAMPBELL COUNTIES, VIRGINIA, IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

Not far from where Patrick Henry lies buried at Red Hill in Virginia, it is probable that we will some day discover the birthplace of Nancy Hanks, the mother of President Abraham Lincoln. There are three very definitely located Hanks communities in the state—one on the Rappahannock River, another on the Nottaway River, and a third on the Roanoke River, settled in the order in which they are named. The counties usually mentioned where most of the homes were located are Richmond, Amelia, Bedford, and Campbell, respectively.

The editor of the *Lincoln Kinsman* has made many trips to the Bedford and Campbell County Court Houses and has made an earnest effort to compile such information about the related Hanks families as may now be available. Supplementing these efforts is the exhaustive research made in these counties by Mrs. Caroline Hanks Hitchcock and by Mrs. Louie

D. White. The documentary findings made by these two women have been presented to the Foundation.

Another invaluable source of information which has been used in the preparation of this monograph is the exhaustive files of correspondence carried on by Mrs. Hitchcock with members of the Hanks family nearly fifty years ago.

It is evident from the writings of Abraham Lincoln that he knew very little if anything about his mother's people, as his mother died when he was but nine years old. What little Lincoln did learn about the family was probably told to him by Dennis Hanks, and Dennis was woefully ignorant when it came to authoritative genealogical evidence about the Virginia Hankses.

Lincoln biographies have been very much confused about the maternity of Lincoln. J. H. Barrett who prepared a campaign biography of

the President had an interview with Mr. Lincoln about his mother's people which he reported in these words, "Mr. Lincoln stated to me in 1861 that his mother was born in Virginia, that she came to Kentucky with some of her relations and not with her parents, but gave me no other clue."

Henry C. Whitney, a close associate of Mr. Lincoln, interviewed some of the Lincoln relatives and put forth this theory, "Nancy Hanks Lincoln's father died in Virginia, and his widow and daughter came to Kentucky where the widow married Henry Sparrow for her second husband."

Another biography, one by Jesse W. Weik, who collaborated with Herndon in his history of Lincoln, states that Dennis Hanks said the Hankses came to Kentucky from the "Roanoke River country in Virginia."

It is planned that this copy of the *Lincoln Kinsman* will exhibit such an exhaustive display of documents relating to the Hankses and their relatives who lived in the Roanoke River country, that there will never be any further question about the relationships of these Virginia families who intermarried in Bedford and Campbell counties, Virginia, and who later lived in the Beech Fork community in Washington County, Kentucky.

The community where we find the colony which consisted of the Hanks, Shipley, Berry, Mitchell, McCord, Pruitt, Stith, Caldwell, Lee, Brumfield, Rogers, and other kindred families is situated on what was known as the Little Falling River, a branch of Roanoke River. The Hanks family

lived on a small tributary called Hatt Creek.

Three counties, Campbell, Carroll, and Halifax, come together near the present town of Brookneal. Within a ten mile radius of the town may be found the Hatt Creek Church community in Campbell County; the burial place of Patrick Henry of Red Hill in Charlotte County; the town of Berryville in Charlotte County, possibly named for the Richard Berry kinsmen; and a portion of Halifax County. Inasmuch as the Roanoke River on which Brookneal is situated separates Campbell and Charlotte from Halifax, Dennis Hanks did not miss it far when he said that the Hankses came from "The Roanoke River country in Virginia." Jesse Weik claimed that Dennis "never knew the county. He thought it was Halifax County but was never certain." In other words Halifax County was just a few miles from the Hanks colony in Campbell County.

The division of the counties to be considered follows: Brunswick from Prince George, Lunenburg from Brunswick, Bedford and Charlotte from Lunenburg, and Campbell from Bedford. A man who purchased a piece of property in Brunswick and settled upon it, although he never moved in fifty years, was situated successively in Brunswick, Lunenburg, Bedford, and Campbell counties.

### **BRUNSWICK COUNTY**

**Formed Out of Prince George  
County in 1732**

The Sparrows, Mitchells, and Bollings were the first of the cognate

families which we discover in the larger area of Brunswick County, from which other county units were later cut off.

Thomas Sparrow entered land on Sturgeon Run as early as September 28, 1728, and on the same day Thomas Mitchell and Stith Bolling located land on Roanoke River and Nottaway River, respectively. Robert Mitchell entered land on Little Nottaway, and John, Thomas, and James Mitchell located land on Roanoke River by the year 1736.

### **LUNENBURG COUNTY**

#### **Formed Out of Brunswick County in 1746**

At the July court in 1750 William Caldwell was directed to make a list of people living in Lunenburg County "from Little Roanoke up the Fork," and among the names secured were Robert Mitchell, Thomas Mitchell, Richard Berry, and Robert Shipley. Here we have the families of Mitchell, Berry, and Shipley brought together for the first time.

There also appears in the Lunenburg records about this time the names of John Berry, James Brumfield, William Brumfield, Thomas Pruitt, Richard Pruitt, and others who became familiar figures connected with the history of the Hanks family in Virginia, North Carolina, and Kentucky. By the year 1758 there were three Shipleys, Robert, Sr., Robert, Jr., and Edward, all listed in Lunenburg as engaged in colonial military service.

### **BEDFORD COUNTY**

#### **Formed Out of Lunenburg County in 1754**

The Little Falling River community

formerly in Lunenburg County fell within the newly established Bedford County boundaries in 1754, and documents relating to the history of these families were then recorded in Bedford.

On May 31, 1755, Robert Shipley, Sr., acquired from James Hunt, in Bedford County, 2 lbs. powder and 4½ lbs. lead. The following July he purchased from the same party 188 lbs. of tobacco and another lot of tobacco during the same month of 119 lbs. Both lots cost him but twelve shillings, sixpence, a hundred weight. Hunt had also paid Robert Caldwell on order of Shipley for hauling the tobacco to John Bolling's warehouse.

Robert Shipley, Sr. purchased several other items of which we have record. On April 19, 1756, he opened an account with Buchanan and Bowman. Among the articles purchased were 3 yards of cotton, 2 felt hats, ½ yd. muslin, 4 linen handkerchiefs, 50 needles, 1 pint rum, 1 horn comb, 1 doz. vest buttons, 1 lb. brimstone, 1 reap hook, 1 lb. nails, and ½ lb. pepper.

Robert Shipley, Jr. also made some purchases in Bedford County in 1760 including 1 rifle gun, 1 cannon, 1 bear skin. He apparently bought other items, and was not able to pay for them, which involved him in several lawsuits.

One of the most important Bedford County records is a land grant recorded at Richmond which states that Robert Shipley Sr. in 1765 located 314 acres of land in Lunenburg County. The name of the county is in error as by this time Bedford had been set apart from Lunenburg for over ten years. The survey follows:

*The Lincoln Kinsman*

*Published Monthly by*  
 LINCOLNIANA PUBLISHERS  
 Box 1110—Fort Wayne, Ind.



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BUSINESS MANAGER  
 MAURICE A. COOK

Annual Subscription.....\$2.00  
 Single Copies......25

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED IN FORMER ISSUES  
 OF THE LINCOLN KINSMAN

1. The Colonial Lincolns, 2. The Unknown Hanks Ancestry, 3. The Herrings of Virginia, 4. Five Shipley Sisters, 5. The Todd Family, 6. Bush Family Documents, 7. Early 19th Century Lincolns, 8. Kentucky Archives, 9. Abraham Lincoln's Father, 10. Hon. Robert Todd Lincoln, 11. James Wright Sparrow, 12. Uncle Mordecai Lincoln, 13. Thomas (Tad) Lincoln, 14. The Tennessee Lincolns, 15. The Lincolns of Hingham, 16. The Richard Berry Family, 17. Southern Branch of the Hankses, 18. The Lincolns of England, 19. Synopsis Life of Lincoln, 20. Lincoln's Letters to His Wife, 21. Correspondence With Kinsmen, 22. A Hanks Family Tree, 23. New Jersey Lincolns, 24. The Pennsylvania Lincolns, 25. Nottoway River Hanks Colony, 26. Relatives of Lincoln's Wife, 27. The Lincolns' Kentucky Neighbors, 28. The Lincolns of Virginia.

"Beginning at a corner gum on the north side of Little Falling River thence S. 40 degrees and west 36 poles to a white oak S. 13 degrees W. 124 poles to Pointer's S. 32 degrees W. 40 poles to a white oak S. 79 degrees W. 14 poles to Wm. Roger's Corner White Oak thence along his line N. 70 degrees W. 74 poles to a hickory N. side of the said River and maple on the south side N. 55 degrees E. 80 poles to a pine N. 24 degrees East 30 P. to Pointer's N. 300 Poles to Pointer's East 46 Poles to a white oak on Daniel Sullivan's line thence along his line S. 14 degrees E. 72 Poles to a Pine E. 164 Poles to an Elm in Daugherty's line thence along his line S. 51 degrees W. 60 P. to a Pine on the S. side of Little Fall-

ing River thence on the said River as it meanders to the first Station."

The year after Robert Shipley, Sr. purchased the 314 acre tract on Little Falling River he sold 150 acres of it to Robert Irvine. The witnesses to the deed were Richard Stith, John McCord, Charles Talbot, and Abraham Irvine. Shipley retained the remaining 164 acres five years, until April 30, 1771, when he sold the tract to Daniel Mitchell, Jr. The witnesses to this deed were Richard Stith, Elisha Pruitt, Daniel Mitchell, John Rogers, and Harry Terrill. It was signed by Robert Shipley and his wife Sarah.

It is now known conclusively that Robert Shipley, Sr. came from Baltimore County, Maryland, where he is mentioned in some land transactions in 1766 as then living in Bedford County, Virginia.

An exceedingly interesting Bedford County document filed in the August Term 1767 papers is a petition for a grist-mill to be erected by Michael Pruitt. It will be noted that the mill site was at the mouth of Falling River close to the Hatt Creek community. It will also be noted that it would be accessible to the adjoining counties of Charlotte and Halifax.

To the Worshipful, the Court of Bedford County:

The Humble Petition of us the Inhabitants, at, and near the Mouth of Falling River; Humbly sheweth, that whereas, Michael Pruitt is Desiros to Build a Grist-Mill on the sd. River, adjoining the Land of John Raffety, whose approbation he has obtained; and the flowing of the water cannot affect the Lands of any other Person but himself; and the Situation so

commodious for many families both in this, and the adjoining Counties who suffer badly in drought of Summer for want of Meal, which cannot be had on the smaller streams; have therefore joined Michael Pruitt, in this his Petition for the sd. Mill, because a certain Gentleman purposeth to build one higher up the River, where it cannot be so Advantagious; the Lands Mountainous and bad ways; thinly Inhabited about it; and so far from where there is the greatest Populace, that it cannot be half so Advantagious as where your Petitioner (whom we must join) purposeth to Build.

We Therefore Humbly hope your Petitioner Michael Pruitt may have a grant to Build his Mill aforesaid and Your Petitioners shall ever pray &c.

Michael Pruitt  
Thos. Watkins  
Wm. Sturman  
Valentine Sturman  
John Raffety  
Samuel Walker  
William Walker  
Daniel Mitchell  
Daniel Driskill  
Fer'd Epperson  
Rich'd Booker  
Parham Booker  
Charles Lee  
William Jones  
Robert Greenwood  
Robert Shipley

About the same time the foregoing petition was circulated, the following document was filed:

To worshipful court of Bedford:

Request that you will grant us an order to repair the road between Col. Randels Rowling Road and from

thence to where the county line crosses James Mitchell's Mill Road and to make such alterations as will be most convenient for the inhabitants so that your humble petitioners may have an opportunity to go to the place of public worship without trouble or molestation. So your humble petitioners shall ever pray:

Robert Mitchell  
Geo. McDavitt  
Wm. Chamberlain  
Pat McDavitt  
James McClaughlin  
Daniel Mitchell  
William Rogers  
Robt. Shipley  
Thos. McMundy  
Matthew Campbell  
William Thompson  
James Mitchell  
William Dudgeon  
Wm. Caldwell  
Richard Dudgeon

One of the most important documents for the purpose of showing the related families in Bedford County is the will of Daniel Mitchell which follows in full and a report of the executors of the estate.

IN THE NAME OF GOD, AMEN,  
I, Daniel Mitchell being now in Proper sence and Memory do Constitute and Ordain this my last Will and Testament Revoking all other wills and Gifts whatsoever, and as to my Worldly Goods I dispose of in manner and form following, viz, After my Lawfull Debts are paid I lend to my beloved Wife Mary Mitchell my Lands and Stock of every kind and all my Estate of Whatsoever kind both Real and Personal during her Natural life and after her Decease my

will is that my Exors., sell the whole of the said Estate to the Best advantage and let it be equally divided amongst all my Children, and Lastly I Constitute and appoint my Brother Robert Mitchell and Michael Pruitt Executors of this my last will and Testament.

In Witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my Seal this thirteenth day of June One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy-five.

Danl. Mitchell, L. S.

Signed Sealed Published and Declared in presence of Charles Cobbs, Daniel Mitchell, Thomas X. McConn. Michael Pruitt, Ex'r.

To the Estate of Dan'l Mitchell..Dr.  
1775

Novr. To Cash Received  
Michael Pruitt, Junr... 10 7 0

1777 To Cash Received  
of Francis Franklin .. 1 5 0

To Interest of Do...Do... 0 1 0  
1778

June 10, 'To Cash of  
Charles Cobbs for

John Rodgers ..... 3 7 6

To Interest of Rodgers.... 0 6 0

To Cash of Robert  
Shipley ..... 10 0 0

To Do. of Daniel &  
John Mitchell ..... 27 10 6

To articles bought at  
sale ..... 7 10 0

To Cash Received of  
Mary Mitchell ..... 26 17 6

To bonds Delivered  
John Smith ..... 30 2 10

117 7 4

Richard Stith

John F. Partrick

Willeson Talbot

Mary Mitchell, the widow of Daniel, moved to Washington County, Kentucky, about 1790. The caravan was attacked by the Indians and her daughter-in-law, Naomi Shipley Mitchell, wife of Robert Mitchell, was massacred. It was Mary Mitchell's granddaughter who was captured by the Indians, and after her return from captivity she became the playmate of her cousin Nancy Hanks. (See *Lincoln Kinsman* No. 4). Further confirmation of the Mitchell relatives will be found in the Campbell County notations.

There were numerous Shipley land transactions in Bedford County. Robert Shipley, Sr. with his wife Sarah, Robert Shipley, Jr. and his wife Rachel, and Edward Shipley all bought and sold land in the Little Falling River community.

Just when the Hanks family first came into Bedford County and settled on Hatt Creek a branch of Falling River, we do not know, but they were there as early as 1780, at least two years before Campbell County was cut off from Bedford.

On March 29, 1780 Josiah Campbell of Bedford County sold to James Hanks of the same county 376 acres of land situated on both sides of Hatt Creek with the boundaries as follows:

"Beginning at corner white oak on north side of South Fork of the Campbell Spring Branch, thence North across the road that leads to Hatt Creek Meeting House to a corner pine in Daugherty's line, west along said line to a corner, south along Daugherty's line to a corner, west along same line across Hatt Creek to Walker's corner, thence across the road

south to a corner (not known by reason of a tree being gone, it being Sturman's corner), thence east across the creek to a corner pine on the north side of the road, thence along Sturman's line across said spring branch to corner, east along Mitchell's line to the beginning." This was signed by Josiah Campbell and witnessed by James Mitchell, John Clayton, and Ben Price.

It would be impossible to exhibit the vast amount of documentary data gathered about the Shipleys, Mitchells, Pruitts, Hanks, and relative families in Bedford County in such limited space available.

### **CHARLOTTE COUNTY**

#### **Formed Out of Lunenburg in 1765**

The Hanks colony in Bedford was adjacent to the Charlotte County line, and it is not strange that we find the same family groups in Charlotte since county lines offer no property barriers. One who has done any considerable amount of research work in the Beech Fork community of Washington County, Kentucky, feels as if he were at home again in Charlotte County, Virginia. Here are the Berrys, Stiths, Mitchells, Pruitts, Waltons, Brumfields, Logans, Hankses, and many other familiar family names.

On March 16, 1780 Richard Berry of Charlotte County sold to Captain Richard Gaines a tract of land adjacent to Logan's line. There is a probability that this is the Richard with whom Nancy Hanks made her home in Kentucky, as Richard entered land in Kentucky about this

time and moved there about 1781 or 1782.

The 1782 census for Charlotte County lists these names: William Berry, Jane Bryant, John Caldwell, George Caldwell, Mary Caldwell, Joseph Friend, William Lee, John Lee, William Brumfield, John Daniel, Joseph Pruitt, Richard Mitchell, Joseph Friend, Jr., and John Friend.

Eight years later in 1788 Abraham Hanks of Campbell County sold land in Charlotte County to Lewis Derosiat on Turkey Cock Creek adjacent to Rogers' line. James Hanks was a witness to this deed. Edward Shipley was suing Archibald Allison on a bond, and James Hanks was also in litigation in the county court.

### **CAMPBELL COUNTY**

#### **Formed Out of Bedford County in 1782**

It is in the records of Campbell County that we find the most voluminous amount of data about the Little Falling River colony, as this section fell within Campbell County when it was cut off from Bedford in 1782.

Here we find numerous Hanks' land transactions, some of which follow in greatly abbreviated form:

Hanks, James to Daniel Walker . . . 150 acres in Campbell County . . . East Branch of Hatt Creek . . . Begin Mitchell's line . . . North side Hank's Spring Branch . . . West to Sturman's corner . . . North, Sturman's line . . . Witnesses: Thomas Hanks, Sarah Hanks, Tabitha Hanks. 1787, July 17. Book 2, p. 253

Hanks, Thomas from Thomas Sturman of North Carolina . . . twenty

acres on Hatt Creek . . . bounded by lands of James Hanks . . . Meeting House . . . Witness: James Hanks.

1793, Dec. 25. Book 3, p. 499

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Hanks, Thomas of Campbell County to Mark Moore . . . 90 acres west side of Hatt Creek . . . Bounded by lands of Freeman Moore, James Hanks, the Meeting House, Alex Driskill, William Sturman, and Thomas Tucker . . . Witnesses: James Hanks, Merimon Tucker, Abraham Hanks.

1794, May 2. Book 3, p. 453

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Hanks, Thomas of Campbell County to Freeman Moore . . . 90 acres of land on east side Hatt Creek . . . bounded by lands of Mark Moore, James Hanks, John Cobbs, Thomas Mackey . . . Witnesses: James Hanks, Merimon Tucker, Abraham Hanks.

1794, May 2. Book 3, p. 452

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Hanks, James and Thomas Hanks to Abraham Hanks, land on Hatt Creek near Meeting House . . . Witnesses: James Hanks and others.

1795, June 5. Book 3, p. 462

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Hanks, Abraham to James Hanks, Jr. . . . Land on west side of the road to Hatt Creek Meeting House, Robert's line, Mitchell's line corner to Thomas Hanks . . . Witness: Thomas Hanks.

1795, June 5. Book 2, p. 560

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One deed of special interest is recorded in December 1790 under the

title, "Heirs of Daniel Mitchell to John Marshall." These heirs signed and the notation follows:

Daniel Mitchell & wife Judy (Pruitt) "went to Shelbyville, Ky."

Robert Mitchell & wife Omi (Nami Shipley).

William Sturman & wife Molly (Mitchell).

James, Sarah, and Adam Mitchell "went to Green County, Ky."

The marriage records of Campbell County are very fragmentary and this is to be regretted because we might expect to find here or in Bedford the marriage certificates of the Shipleys, Mitchells, and Hankses, as well as those of other marriages which the deed books reveal took place. The editor of the *Lincoln Kinsman* made a tabulation of marriage returns in Campbell County actually recorded for the years 1782 to 1789 inclusive which reveals how incomplete they are: 1782, 20 marriages; 1783, 3; 1784, 0; 1785, 2; 1786, 9; 1787, 10; 1788, 17; 1789, 30. The parents of Nancy Hanks are believed to have been married between 1783 and 1785.

There was a general migration which took place during the time the Hankses and their relatives were living in Campbell County, and we find large numbers of them including the Hankses, Shipleys, Mitchells, Pruitts, and McCords settled for a time in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, but their final destination was Kentucky. Whether or not Nancy Hanks went with her mother direct to Kentucky or whether one or both of them went via North Carolina has not been fully determined, but they were in Kentucky apparently by 1789.